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ABSTRACT

With large-scale immigration in the last 20 years and a high birth rate, Chicanos now comprise the second-largest minority in the United States. This ethnohistorical account attempts to unravel the multiple heritages and influences shaping Chicanos from pre-Columbian Mexico to present-day United States. The book focuses on questions of land, labor, and wealth, especially as they involved struggles with Europeans and their descendants that transformed indigenous peoples into peasants. As people's relationship to the land changed and control over their labor shifted, the peasants were further displaced and became migrants and immigrants. A model of sociocultural change that focuses on class, culture, color, contact, conflict, and change is used as a framework to understand the structure and evolutionary transformation of the social order in each of four stages: the pre-Columbian period (30,000 B.C. to 1519 A.D.), the Spanish colonial era (1521-1821), Mexican independence and nationalism (1821-1846), and the Anglo-American period (1846-1960s). Religious, political, economic, and educational influences on the social order are also discussed. The conclusion reflects on the legacies of the past and their implications for the future of the unique multicultural Chicano identity. Contains references, photographs, illustrations, maps, and an index. (SV)

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